Myocardial Gene Transfer for Patients With Myocardial Ischemia

To the Editor:

The report by Losordo et al\(^1\) concerning myocardial gene transfer for patients with myocardial ischemia is promising. However, I believe their report merely demonstrates safety and does not provide substantial “evidence for a favorable clinical effect of direct myocardial injection of naked plasmid DNA encoding for VEGF [vascular endothelial growth factor].”\(^1\) The clinical outcomes are equally compatible with placebo effects that result from surgical procedures.

Excitement often accompanies new cutting-edge scientific advances. This enthusiasm seems to be especially communicated through innovative surgical procedures.\(^2\) Cardiovascular disease seems especially susceptible.\(^3\) The results reported in this phase 1 clinical study do not exceed outcomes reported from the 2 late-1950s randomized controlled trials comparing internal mammary artery ligation with sham operation.\(^4,5\) In these trials, subjective improvement was dramatic, especially in the sham procedure, and objective evidence, although more primitive by today’s standards, was substantial.

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